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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001552

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: CPN-UML GEN SEC MADHAV NEPAL ON POSSIBLE  
PEACE PROCESS, IRAQ

REF: KATHMANDU 1479

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons 1.4 (a, b, d)

#### SUMMARY

1. (S) During their first meeting on August 5, Madhav Kumar Nepal, CPN-UML General Secretary, sought the Ambassador's approval of secret exploratory peace talks in a third country. The UML leader wants the King and parties to present a unified front to the Maoists and determine Maoist intentions. If the Maoists are not bona fide in the negotiations, the government can expose that fact to the people, according to Nepal. Elections may then still take place. The Sec was negative about the prospect of Kathmandu providing forces to protect U.N. troops in Iraq.

#### POSSIBLE PEACE TALKS

2. (S) CPN-UML General Secretary Nepal briefed the Ambassador on attempts by the Maoists, the palace and the government to pursue secret talks in a third country. The GenSec stated that peace talks should start soon, the sooner, the better. He saw an eagerness on the part of the Maoists to sit in a dialogue. The Maoists seem to be sincere about the talks and have "packed their bags." Nepal expressed frustration about the Prime Minister's delay in talking with the King and getting the green light to begin talks. Different party leaders should eventually be on the government's team, Nepal stressed. He wants to get the message out to the people that the government is really starting to talk with the Maoists. He also wants to create an atmosphere to put pressure on the Maoists to solve the problem at the negotiating table. The GON needs to keep a certain level of military pressure on the Maoists until they realize they cannot win with guns and need to take negotiations seriously, according to Nepal. If it turns out there is no real desire on the part of the Maoists to succeed at negotiations, that would be exposed during the course of the talks. Nepal wants to make that clear to the people to allay their suspicions of the government. At the same time, he recognizes that the government needs to be cautious about sharing what the government's bottom-line is; they would only provide a general outline to the populace. The Ambassador told Nepal that the USG has no objections to talks in a third country and talks out of the limelight make sense. Likewise, the US has no objection to any organization/individual/country that can play a useful role in facilitating talks.

3. (C) The Ambassador asked Nepal about the role of the National Congress (NC) party, and in particular, GP Koirala. While wary about Koirala's role, Nepal emphasized the necessity of a common understanding among all the legitimate political forces. He said that even if Koirala did not join the government, there should still be some joining together for the peace process. He said the coalition partners need to take Koirala into confidence and work in channels so they can have a clear vision of the steps ahead.

4. (C) When dealing with an insurgency that has the goal of a one-party country, there are some fundamental positions the government must keep in mind, Nepal noted: no compromise on multi-party democracy; no curtailment of people's rights; some role for the King in a constitutional monarchy, and retention of an open, pluralistic society. The Maoists would need to agree on these positions for the talks to succeed. Key to peace would be disarmament of the Maoists and the reintegration and rehabilitation of the armed insurgents.

#### ELECTIONS

5. (C) Nepal laid out his vision of a possible way ahead if the preliminary talks result in a certain framework for future rounds. Before further talks, the coalition partners would use roundtable conferences to engage with all elements of Nepalese society. There would also be international involvement, preferably the UN or other INGOs. Nepal stressed that the Maoists would have to submit their arms under the custody of the UN or other observers before the formation of an interim government or holding of elections.

He indicated flexibility on constitutional issues - either a constituent assembly or interim government or parliament could amend the Constitution. But the process should not trample over the Constitution. If a referendum were needed, that would be acceptable. A series of elections would be less expensive than the cost of the war.

16. (C) Agreeing with Nepal that the Maoists need to lay down their arms to have free and fair elections, the Ambassador asked what the UML people in the field believed were Maoist intentions. Nepal admitted that there was not uniform information. There seemed to be a split between the political level, who wanted to go to a negotiated settlement as a final solution, and the military level, who believed they could win militarily and did not see a need to compromise. They just wanted to continue to strengthen their position. Nepal reiterated that after the armed wings were decommissioned and demobilized a political solution would be possible.

17. (C) The Ambassador asked Nepal about the PM's statement that elections would be held next April even if there were no agreement with the Maoists. Nepal replied that if the government tried its best in the peace process, but the Maoists were the hurdle, then there would be no other choice but to have elections. But he restated his hope that the Maoists were sincere about talks. He went on that if the King were the hurdle to the peace process, then there would be no elections because they would be meaningless. Nepal expressed distrust regarding the intentions of both the King and the Maoists. His main concern was retaining the multi-party system, even if the King had to lose some of his power and become a 21st century monarch.

#### PEACE BUREAU PLUS A PARALLEL MILITARY ADVISORY BODY

18. (C) The Ambassador and Nepal discussed how a Peace Bureau could fit into the process. The Ambassador explained the US wants to support a Peace Bureau that would be apolitical and act as a thinktank to advise the politicians. Nepal accepted the idea of a working secretariat composed of experts, but thought there should also be a parallel advisory body that would include representatives from the political parties. The decision-makers would thus get an apolitical take and a political take from party advisors.

19. (C) Nepal then suggested that the government needed something similar to the Peace Bureau, but on the military side. The country lacked an expert team that could analyze events and assess incidents. He saw a need for an organization similar to our J5 that focused on Strategy and Plans, however, he saw it as having experts not only from the RNA, but also the Armed Police Force, the civil police, and intelligence. Nepal said that unlike the Peace Bureau, which should be discussed in the press, this military body should be kept quiet.

#### NEED FOR MILITARY REFORM

10. (C) In addition to the military needing to incorporate counter-guerilla warfare and tactics, Nepal stressed the need for military reform. The RNA leadership needed to take strong steps against those who had committed serious crimes; rape being the most serious. Military personnel should be publicly punished in such cases. To boost the morale of the people, the RNA needed to take steps to show it was addressing abuses. Nepal realized, however, the need to use certain methods to extract information and saw some room for maneuver in those cases.

#### NEGATIVE ON TROOPS FOR U.N. PROTECTION IN IRAQ

11. (C) The Ambassador pressed Nepal to support sending Nepali troops to Iraq to protect the UN presence and help stabilize Iraq. Nepal said that while he understood the US desire to have many countries involved, Kathmandu had to consider the serious crisis it is facing here. At this stage, when people suspect that Nepal could become a failed state, it would not be wise. He voiced an additional concern that it would be hard to find consensus on this issue and another controversy was not what the government needed now. The Ambassador pushed back. Reminding him that Nepal has done great service to the UN, the Ambassador said he would appreciate the General Secretary keeping an open mind.

#### MORIARTY